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CONTACT: Jessica McLeish  
951.805.1236  
Jessica@dmpublicrelations.com

## **San Bernardino County Workforce Investment Board puts stimulus dollars to work for youth**

*Workforce readiness training program will pay 1,600 young county residents to build skills while working at summer jobs around the county*

**SAN BERNARDINO, Calif. (April 29, 2009)** –As part of a \$15 million allocation from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), the Workforce Investment Board of San Bernardino County will apply \$7 million toward work readiness training for 1,600 county youth this summer.

Qualifying participants between the ages of 14 and 24 will be taught work readiness skills and placed into paid positions to help them gain work experience. Wages for these jobs will be paid with ARRA dollars administered by the Workforce Investment Board.

Stimulus funds are being provided by the federal government and allocated toward specific workforce programs in local areas nationwide, with the goal of creating opportunities for youth job skills training.

“This age is a critical time for youth to learn basic job skills such as proper dress and etiquette, showing up on time, providing customer service and other job skills. With this economy’s decreasing job opportunities, the federal government made a priority of funding work experience opportunities for youth. The Workforce Investment Board is excited to implement this directive in our local area,” said John Gibson, Chairman of the Workforce Investment Board.

A variety of employers, including city and county offices, private companies and community-based organizations were evaluated and selected to participate in the program based on each organization’s ability to provide work sites where youth can learn and develop their skills.

The program kicks off in May with a multi-week work readiness-training session that will start with an assessment of the skills and interests of each youth, and continue with training in basic job skills such as work ethics, dressing for success, time sheets, resumes, productivity, employer expectations and more.

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Each participant will be placed into a paid job, where they can continue to reinforce the soft skills learned and begin to develop skills specific to that job. The types of jobs in this program include clerical, maintenance, grounds work, restaurant, retail, security and more. Positions available are in a range of fields including veterinary, medical, dental, insurance, weatherization, auto mechanics, hospitality and more.

Approximately \$5 million of the ARRA funding allocated to the Workforce Investment Board will be used to pay the wages of these youth. The program will run from May to September of 2009. The jobs can range from 10 to 40 hours per week. The jobs may pay minimum wage or more, based on the skills of the participant and requirements of the job. Some year-round work experience positions will also be available for qualifying youth.

“These young people are our county’s future workforce, so our focus is to teach them how to be a great employee. These early work experiences are critical to the young person’s transition into adulthood, and provide the opportunities they need to hone their skills and build the confidence they need to become productive members of our county’s economy,” said Sandy Harmsen, executive director of the Workforce Investment Board.

Youth entering the program must meet qualifications including San Bernardino county residency, right-to-work documentation, and selective service registration for males over 18. Youth eligible to participate must also qualify as low-income according to ARRA, or qualify as youth who would benefit from the program.

The Workforce Investment Board’s contracted youth service providers will oversee the work experience, checking in on the participant’s progress regularly so that they can work with the youth to improve skills in any areas as needed.

The Workforce Investment Board’s youth service providers have been recruiting participants for this program and many slots are filled. But, there are still a few open positions, and as some participants complete their programs, more spaces will become available.

The Workforce Investment Board’s Youth service providers are spread geographically throughout the county. They include:

- Apple Valley Unified School District - areas served include Apple Valley, Hesperia, Victorville, Adelanto
- Career Institute - areas served include Rancho Cucamonga, Ontario, Chino, Alta Loma, Barstow, Victorville, Adelanto, Apple Valley, Big Bear and Crestline Communities
- Chino Valley Unified School District - serving Chino, Chino Hills and Ontario
- CRYROP (Colton-Rialto-Yucaipa Regional Occupational Program) - serving Bloomington, Colton, East Highland, Fontana, Grand Terrace, Loma Linda, Redlands, Yucaipa, Mentone and East Valley

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- Goodwill Industries - serving High Desert, East Valley and West Valley
- Hesperia Unified School District - Hesperia, Apple Valley, Victorville
- Mountain Communities Boys & Girls Club - serving Crestline, Lake Arrowhead, Running Springs and unincorporated areas of mountain communities
- NCNW - serving Rialto, Fontana, Colton and Bloomington
- PAL Center - serving Muscoy, Rialto, Bloomington, Colton, Highland, Fontana, East/Central Valley unincorporated
- Morongo Unified School District - serving Morongo Basin areas
- Needles - serving Needles
- Lucerne Valley Career Academy - serving Lucerne Valley, Adelanto, Victorville, Hesperia, Apple Valley and Barstow

Youth can apply for the program by calling 800.451.JOBS or by directly contacting one of the youth providers listed above.

“Nothing is more important to our county’s economy than helping to build the skills of our future workforce,” said Board of Supervisors Chairman Gary Ovitt. “We support the Workforce Investment Board’s effort and we know this work will make a difference in the lives and careers of many San Bernardino County residents.”

#### **About the San Bernardino County Workforce Investment Board**

The San Bernardino County Workforce Investment Board is comprised of private business representatives and public partners appointed by the County Board of Supervisors. It strives to create a strong, vibrant economy by developing the county’s workforce through partnerships with business, education and community-based organizations.

The WIB, through the county’s Economic Development Agency and Workforce Development Department, operates the county’s Employment Resource Centers and Business Resource Centers. The ERCs provide individuals with job training, placement and the tools to strengthen their skills to achieve a higher quality of life, and the BRCs support and provide services to the county’s businesses including employee recruitment.

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